

Bridge to span northern border

BY LORENA FIGUEROA
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The Mexican government has begun the construction of the new Tornillo-Guadalupe international bridge, which according to Mexican officials, is expected to be finished this summer.

However, the port of entry might not be ready for use until the end of this year.

Mexican authorities still need to build inspection facilities and a roadway to connect the port of entry with a major highway that runs into the interior of Mexico.

According to Mexico's Transport and Communications Secretariat (SCT), the construction of the bridge on the Mexican side was planned to start in January but begun a month sooner after two construction companies won the bid for the project.

Productos y Estructuras de Concreto, S.A. de C.V. from Monterrey in association with Construcciones y Sistemas Mati, S.A. de C. V. from Juárez were awarded the project, said Óscar Armando García Malo, the assistant director of the SCT Department of Works in Chihuahua who is in charge of the project.

The companies have a budget of 62.6 million pesos or about \$5 million which only includes the building of the bridge and the accesses to the Mexican Customs inspection facilities, García Malo said.

The budget is less than the projected 80 million pesos, or about \$6.4 million.

The companies will also have six months to complete the Mexican portion of the bridge, which will be 210 meters or about 693 feet long, he added.

"We are working full swing to have the bridge ready in the summer," García Malo said.

Until last week three cement piles were already placed and heavy machinery was excavating a hole on the ground to place another one.

Once completed, the structure will be connected to the other half of the six-lane bridge on the U.S. side, where it was finished in the fall.

The U.S. side of the port cost about \$133 million, with the federal government contributing \$93 million.

The first phase of the project will consist of building the roadway from the Tornillo-Guadalupe bridge to the Juárez-Porvenir Avenue, at the 30-kilometer mark.

The second phase will stretch the road about 20 miles to the Chihuahua-Juárez highway.

The project will be conducted by the state but use federal funds. Construction of the first phase of the access road will cost up to 120 million pesos (\$9.6 million), according to the SCT.

Mexican authorities estimate that the new port of entry will be ready for use by the end of 2014.

It will replace the two-lane Fabens-Caseta bridge, which was built in 1938 and is about 650 feet from the new crossing.

Mexico was supposed to begin construction on its side two months after the ground-breaking ceremony for the new port in July 2011.

Since then, Mexican officials have moved the start date several times.

The SCT, which is responsible for the construction, has blamed the delay on a lack of funding allocations and on national elections that installed new leadership in late 2012.



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